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Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects

Note verbale dated 29 June 2000 from the Permanent Mission of Portugal to the United Nations addressed to the secretariat of the Preparatory Committee

The Permanent Mission of Portugal to the United Nations presents its compliments to the secretariat of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and, on behalf of the European Union, has the honour to transmit for issuance as documents of the Preparatory Committee, in accordance with paragraph 9 of General Assembly resolution 54/54 V of 15 December 1999, the Canadian-European Union statement, adopted at the European Union-Canada Summit in Ottawa on 16 December 1999, on small arms and light weapons (see annex).

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Annex to the note verbale dated 29 June 2000 from the Permanent Mission of Portugal to the United Nations addressed to the secretariat of the Preparatory Committee

European Union-Canada statement adopted at the European Union-Canada Summit in Ottawa on 16 December 1999

The European Union and Canada establish a joint Working Group on Small Arms to Tackle the Spread and Destabilizing Accumulation of Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Further to their 2 September 1999 Joint Statement on Small Arms, the European Union and Canada are continuing to pursue their common approach to tackling the problem posed by the excessive and destabilizing accumulation and uncontrolled spread of small arms.

This problem represents a dire threat to human security. Where an environment of insecurity and fear persists in regions and communities, the continuing availability of small arms can serve to ignite or exacerbate conflict as well as to increase the duration and lethality of the violence. It can seriously hamper post-conflict peace-building efforts and initiatives to build cultures of peace. The victims are frequently found among the most vulnerable segments of society, especially children. The European Union and Canada will strengthen their cooperation to tackle this human security dilemma.

The European Union and Canada welcome the decision of the United Nations General Assembly to convene an international conference on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects in June/July 2001. They will consult during the preparatory process to ensure that the outcome of the Conference manifests our common approach and provides concrete and meaningful responses to the small arms problem. The European Union and Canada will work towards ensuring that the Conference brings about effective guidelines or legally binding instruments as well as a programme of action encompassing all areas of international cooperation in small arms. They also underline the importance of integrating regional approaches to these efforts.

Both sides underscore the importance of continued work to elaborate a protocol to combat the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, ammunition and other related materials, supplementary to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Both will work diligently towards the completion of negotiations in the year 2000.

Canada continues to share the principles of the European Union Joint Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons adopted on 17 December 1998. Canada also shares the principles of the European Union Code of Conduct on Arms Exports and recognizes its contribution to ongoing international efforts to regulate the transfer of small arms. The European Union and Canada are committed to setting high standards for the management of, and restraint in, conventional arms exports and share the aim to achieve greater transparency in arms transfers. Following this commitment to high standards for arms export criteria, the European Union and Canada will promote international and regional efforts to ensure that small arms and light weapons are only transferred to States or State-authorized entities. While these

arms are the basis for the legitimate self-defence needs of all States, action must be taken to prevent these weapons from reaching the hands of oppressive State authorities, terrorists, criminals, paramilitary organizations and other non-State actors.

The European Union and Canada welcome the request to the Secretary-General of the United Nations to establish a group of governmental experts to study the phenomenon of small arms-brokering activities, including transportation agents and financial transactions.

The European Union and Canada welcome the decision on small arms and light weapons adopted by the OSCE Forum for Security Cooperation. The European Union and Canada will continue to work actively together to ensure that OSCE, Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and other relevant forums develop concrete measures to tackle these problems.

Drawing on each other's expertise and experiences, the European Union and Canada will work together to operationalize their common approach by supporting the implementation of initiatives and projects in the most affected regions of the world, without duplicating existing initiatives. In particular, the European Union and Canada will focus on Africa as the region in most immediate need of assistance and support.

In order to further their cooperation, the European Union and Canada have decided to create a joint European Union-Canada Working Group on Small Arms. The Working Group will be convened at least once during each European Union Presidency.